I. **Title and brief description:** Give a title and short description. What, briefly, will students be doing in this unit of study? (2-3 sentences)

   a. **Team Rolex: Why do we value what we do?**
      i. Side note: Before the break started, I had students brainstorm a team name for when I took over the class in hopes of developing a classroom community. One of the loudest suggestions was “Team Rolex.” I think that it’s interesting that the student chose a high end watch to represent the class, even though few of them wear a watch, let alone have come into contact with a Rolex. I think that this may be an interesting segue into a conversation about our values and why he immediately jumped to such a high end and materialistic product.

   b. Students will be evaluating their perception of the world around them; specifically, students will be writing and thinking about their opinions about society (in terms of how they view money, death, emotion, and other large topics) and how Morrie and Mitch view them in the novel *Tuesdays with Morrie*.

II. **Big Idea/Essential Question:** Explain your “big idea” and/or essential question.

   a. How have we come to view society? Specifically, I want students to better understand how society is shaped around them and how it impacts how they live day to day. By understanding this, I then want them to respond to how Morrie understands his world and community, and if his ideas have merit or not.

III. **Learning Goals:** Explain what learning goals you have set for students’ investigation of the big idea/essential question. Consider the following areas:

   a. Development of content understanding (key concepts and ideas)
      i. The unit will open with students’ journaling about the “big ideas” of the novel and what they mean to them. Hopefully these will tie-in with the New Year and theme of New Year resolutions. In this way, we will set up concrete ideas about important themes and work to develop thought about them as we read the novel.

   b. Development of habits of mind and work, including habits of independent or collaborative thinking and doing typical of readers, writers, speakers, creators, researchers and thinkers in the discipline (ways of knowing)
      i. Students will have nightly homework so that they are able to come prepared to class each day. This is important so that when we inevitably work as a group or a class as a whole, students have responses the text prepared. For homework each night, students will be asked to respond to a guided reading question. Because this is likely the most accessible text we’ve read so far, students will be asked to think more deeply on a more regular basis. Much of this unit will be dependent on independent thought and discussion, thus making students’ opinions very important to our collective understanding.

   c. Literacy development, including capabilities of proficient readers, writers, and speakers
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i. I will take some class time to further explain specific historical events and terms like the OJ Simpson Trial and ALS (and the ice bucket challenge and its relevance to today) so that students have a better understanding of the culture 20/30 years ago. In terms of writing, students will be journaling a nightly for homework in response to the guided reading questions. As long as they are responding to the question using their own opinion and the text, they will receive full credit.

d. Development of the classroom as a learning community
   i. Because this book surrounds emotions and questions society, it is my hope that students will begin to feel comfortable sharing out personal opinions about the book as well as the world around them. The connections between the book’s themes are experience and opinion based, so the stakes are lower, hopefully encouraging a more open environment in the classroom.

IV. Rationale: Your rationale should show clearly your careful consideration of a full range of factors in planning your unit to ensure equitable support and meaningful, authentic, and substantial learning for all students, as follows:
   a. Learning goals: Explain why your big idea/essential question and your learning goals are important for your discipline and meaningful for your students.
      i. While mentioned in III. d. that the stakes are lower, I believe that it is very important for students to think critically about the world and American society around them. Their opinions are incredibly important to this unit, not only in sharing their experience with current society, but also thinking more objectively and critically about why and how society has evolved to what it is now, even since their own childhood. Hopefully this will broaden their horizons and ideas when looking at the world around them.
   b. Curriculum standards: Explain how the big idea/essential question connects to the Guiding Principles in the MA curriculum frameworks. Identify which learning standards are addressed and how.
      i. Part of
      ii. W.11.3c Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution.)
         1. Discuss Mitch’s use of flashbacks and confabulation and how it creates a story out of true events. Ask questions such as how does Mitch’s tone change from flashback to current day? How does Mitch as the narrator’s tone sound when describing himself at different points in his life? Etc.
      iii. W.11.3d Use precise words, and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
         1. Discuss and journal about images of Morrie’s decay and connect to what ALS is.
iv. **MA.W.11.3.A**—Demonstrate understanding of the concept of theme by writing short narratives, poems, essays, speeches, or reflections that respond to universal themes (challenges, the individual and society, moral dilemmas, the dynamics of tradition and change.)

1. Students will write a variety of personal expressions and reflections like personal aphorisms, *this I believe* essay, journal entries about themes in the book, *I am* poems/slam poetry, acrostic poems, etc.

v. **SL.11.1d**—Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions, when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen investigation or complete the task.

1. We will discuss different subjects like money, death, love, emotions, media/advertising and other themes covered by Morrie through discussion and independent journaling as well as other classroom activities.

vi. **L.11.3a**—Vary syntax for effect, consulting references for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

1. How does Morrie speak differently than other people? We will watch Ted Koppel interview with Morrie to better put a face and voice to the character in the book.

vii. **RL.11.5**—Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

1. We will look at flashbacks and other emotional devices that Mitch Albom uses in the novel to “contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.”

c. **Students’ background and readiness:** What strengths and interests, in terms of their content understanding (prior knowledge), academic and literacy development, personal and cultural abilities, and development as a learning community, are you taking into account in planning this unit?

   i. This is easily the most accessible text that the juniors have been given this year, and because of this they will be writing a lot. Even though the writing is relatively low stakes in its dependence on individual student opinion and thought, it is important that students’ writing is deep and meaningfully written and considered. They have had a lot of practice with close reading and other note taking techniques that will help them throughout this unit and beyond.

d. **Student needs:** What particular needs of your students—academic, social, personal, language (ELLS)—have you taken into account in planning the unit? What will they need to be able to do in order to meet the learning goals?

   i. Much of the ELL and IEP scaffolding I will be doing will actually aid the entire class. I will be provide a reference wall with relevant information to the novel (e.g. the aids epidemic, the OJ Simpson trial and perhaps
Ferguson, ALS and Lou Gehrig, the evolution of the cell phone) so that students have an idea of what kind of world Mitch lives in during his meetings with Morrie.

e. Research- and evidence-based best practice ideas: Explain how research and best practice ideas have informed your plan.
   i. In order to create a more holistic environment, I want to bring in both current events to today’s society as well as events that were current to Morrie and Mitch during the novel. In this way I hope to make the experience between connections of the book and students’ experiences more authentic while allowing them a space to express their individual thoughts and opinions and have them be valid.

V. Assessments: It is essential for both you and your students that your formative and culminating assessments clearly show the extent to which students have achieved learning goals.
   a. Explain your main assessments and why they are appropriate for your learning goals.
      i. The main assessments will be 1 creative piece from the second week of the unit, 1 rewritten journal entry from the first week of the unit (about a topic they had chosen to write about), and their nightly journals which will contain their responses to the nightly homework. There should be a minimum of four entries per week.
   b. How will students know what to expect and the criteria for good work?
      i. Students will receive a final rubric for each project throughout the unit and I will take class time to explain and elaborate on any questions that students will have.
   c. Attach a draft of your culminating assignment and corresponding assessment criteria/rubric.
      i. TBA
   d. How will students and parents learn about students’ overall academic progress from these assessments?
      i. Students will receive a letter to parents explaining the overall goals and projects of the unit as well as feedback on the final assessments.

VI. Unit Calendar
   a. Provide a calendar of key learning activities, learning strategies, and assessments for your anticipated timeframe for the unit.
      i. Week 1-Intro week, journaling about topics, ALS information, personal aphorisms, character chart of who Mitch and Morrie are.
      ii. Week 2- continue reading and journaling, picking and working on poetry piece, this I believe short essay, in class discussions
      iii. Week 3-finish book, turning week 1 journaling into a formal response
   b. Explain your sequence of activities—why does this particular order make sense in light of your learning goals and rationale for the unit?
      i. I’m hoping to keep the unit engaging from week to week. The first and third week will be much more focused on more formal assignments and
information. The second week will be focused on creative projects, but also discussing the text. I’m hoping that by putting the creative project in the middle it will pace the unit more effectively so that all of the work due doesn’t bottleneck in the final week. I’m also hoping that the creative week in the middle will inspire kids to look introspectively and continue to stay engaged with the text while connecting their own views.

By staggering the writing load throughout the unit, I will also hopefully be able to dedicate class time to other activities like discussion and in class exercises that get students moving around and thinking about the novel, like chalk talk, save the last word, etc.

VII. Resources:
   a. How will you work to actively involve parents in their child’s academic activities and performance, and communicate clearly with them?
      a. I will be sending home a letter to students’ parents informing them of the unit and who I am and how they can reach me. One of my goals this semester is also to work more closely with guidance so that I can better aid and understand students who may be struggling and how I can better scaffold and communicate to them.
   b. What resources—such as guest presenters, A/V, field trips, and material artifacts—from colleagues, families, and the community will you draw on to enhance learning?
      a. I will be using the ELMO in our classroom to both introduce students to the Ted Koppel interview, different forms of poetry, and explain the relevance of ALS and the OJ Simpson trial. I will introduce “I Am” poems, and likely ask Ms. Mattioli for examples of “I am from” poems that she does every year in her class.
   c. What legal or ethical issues are involved in your use of the Internet and other resources and how have you addressed them?
      a. I will only be using clips from the internet that are appropriate and legally ethical to show in a classroom setting to my students.

VIII. Post-Teaching Reflection
   a. Based on your culminating and other assessments of learning goals, analyze the extent to which students achieved your learning goals.
      i. To what extent did different students achieve the learning goals?
      ii. What do you learn from differences in performance, or puzzling student performances (hard for you to explain), about the particular challenges of learning in this unit?
      iii. What do you learn from differences in performance about the effectiveness of your planning for the needs of different students?
   b. What would you change to improve this plan and why?